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Mayor

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**Health Department**

Administration

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## **City of Milwaukee Health Department Receives \$538,000 State Grant to Improve Bioterrorism Readiness**

Governor Jim Doyle announced today that the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) is the recipient of a \$538, 869 grant from the State of Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance (OJA) to enhance bioterrorism readiness. The funding will be used to improve the MHD's capacity and capability to respond not only to incidents of suspected bioterrorism, but also to the routine and daily surveillance and identification of communicable diseases within the community.

"Although the City of Milwaukee is the recipient of this grant award, be assured that the funding will be used to strengthen and improve regional response" said Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. The UASI grant program is predicated on creating investment for regional partnerships and strategies."

A majority of the grant will be used to enhance MHD laboratory capabilities, specifically as they relate to rapid identification and "fingerprinting" of disease strains. This will entail installation of cutting-edge technology (e.g. molecular sequencing), making the MHD lab the only public health lab in southeastern Wisconsin with this capability. Using this technology will yield the critical information necessary to direct other public health strategies, such as treatments and prevention in the event of a bioterrorism attack.

Some of the monies will also be used to improve laboratory environmental safety in the receipt and analysis of biologic specimens. This will enable the laboratory to maintain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) certification as a BioSafety Level III laboratory.

"The MHD laboratory represents one of only three facilities in the state that are part of the CDC's Laboratory Response Network (LRN)," said Bevan K. Baker, Commissioner of Health. "Being part of the LRN ensures that the MHD can respond quickly and effectively through mobilization of specially trained staff, equipment and protocols."

Additional grant monies will be used to purchase hardware and software to augment MHD's disease surveillance and to facilitate the dispensing of medications through mass clinic sites within the region. It will also be put to use on a more routine basis in the tracking of reportable communicable diseases within the community.

The UASI grant program typically has focused on more traditional first-responder agencies such as police and fire departments. This funding recognizes the need for a multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary approach," said Mayor Tom Barrett. "Coordination between public health, law enforcement and fire departments is essential to mitigating the impact of a bioterrorism event."